(ii) The 1995 Assessment of forest cover of the country is estimated at 639.600 sq. km. which is 19.56 percent of the geographical area.

(iii) While comparing the 1995 assessment of forest cover of the country to that of 1993 assessment, there has been a decrease of 507 sq.km in the extent of actual forest cover of the country.

(iv) The forest cover in the North Eastern region has decreased by 783 sq.km, while there has been an increase of 276 sq.km in rest of the States/UTs resulting in an overall decrease of 507 sq.km over a period of two years.

(d) The main reasons for decline of forest cover in the country is attributed to wide gap in demand and supply of fuelwood, fodder & small timber resulting in unsustainable withdrawl, damage due to shifting cultivation, forest fires, grazing and also due to diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes.

[Translation]

Assistance to NGO's/VO's of Chhota Udaipur

1708. SHRI N.J. RATHWA : Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government had given financial assistance to a few social organisations for the welfare of the tribals of Chhota-Udaipur in Gujarat;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the details of the assistance given during the last three years;

(c) whether the said financial assistance had been mis-appropriated;

(d) if so, the action taken in this regard; and

(e) the directions, the Government propose to issue to the social organisations for the proper utilisation of the financial assistance provided for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes People?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d). Do not arise.

(e) Sanction of Grant-in-aid under the scheme of 'Aid to Voluntary Organisations' for the Welfare of SCs/STs is Governed by the terms and conditions of the scheme and also the provisions of the General Financial Rules, 1963, as amended from time to time, so as to ensure its proper utilisation. Inspections of the Programmes undertaken by the Voluntary Organisations are also got conducted through the concerned State Governments/Union Territory Administrations/National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes/officials of the Ministry. However, issuance of further directions apart from those covered in the schemes is not contemplated presently.

Vacant Posts in FCI

1709. SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN : Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

(a) whether the number of posts under the various categories are lying vacant in the Food Corporation of India for the last many years;

(b) if so, the categories of posts and date from which these have been lying vacant alongwith the number of posts belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe out of these posts and the sanctioned strength of these posts in each category;

(c) the time by which these posts will be filled alongwith the reasons for delay in filling them; and

(d) the steps taken by the Union Government for filling up various vacant posts?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) to (d). The information is being collected.

Revision of Rate in Super Bazar

1710. SHRI I.D. SWAMI :
SHRI RAMSAGAR :
SHRI JANG BAHADUR SINGH PATEL :

Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to refer to the reply given to the Unstarred Question No. 3447, dated August 29, 1996 regarding revision of rates and state :

(a) the details of proposal for revision of rates received and the proposal approved, rejected and still pending out of them;

(b) whether these proposals have been timely finalised;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the Super Bazar has been denying the availability of fast moving items like torches, cells, lamps, tubelights of reputed brands to the consumers and the Government Departments for number of years;

(e) if so, the reasons therefor;

(f) whether the Government have received letters from the Members of Parliament and public in this regard;

(g) if so, the details thereof; and

(h) the steps taken by the Government to introduce the said items forthwith?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) to (c). It has been reported by the Super Bazar that they deal with thousands of items. About 155 proposals were revceived for revision of rates, out of which 119 have already been finalised and the remaining are under